



Food Safety for Food Pantries



A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO WHAT TO DO IN AN EMERGENCY EVENT

GREATER PITTSBURGH
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Table of Contents

Food Safety In Case of Emergencies	1-10
What Should Your Emergency Pantry Look Like.....	2
What to Do When the Power Goes Out.....	3
Refrigerated Foods: When to Save and When to Discard	3-4
Evaluating Frozen Foods	5
Frozen Foods: When to Save and When to Discard	5-6
Evaluating Canned Goods that Have Frozen	7
What to Do Following a Flood.....	8
Food Safety Following A Fire	9
References.....	10
Shelf Life of Food Bank Products.....	12-28
What do the Dates on Food Packages and Medicines Mean?.....	13
Shelf-Stable Product	14-19
Tips on Storing Refrigerated Food.....	20-21
Tips on Storing Frozen Food.....	22-23
Prepared Foods.....	24
Tips on Storing Fresh Produce	25
Sources	26
2-Page Shelf Life Handout.....	27-28
Posters	29-33
How Many Germs Live on Your Cell Phone.....	30
Seventy-Five Percent of Americans Use their Phones while on the Toilet	31
Beware of the Temperature Danger Zone.....	32
Please Wash Your Hands Before and After Handling Food	33
Recalls.....	34

FOOD SAFETY IN CASE OF EMERGENCY



FOOD SAFETY IN CASE OF EMERGENCY

Emergency situations can arise without warning. Often, people are caught by surprise, unprepared for the situations they find themselves in—even when it comes to something as essential as having a safe food supply. This guide provides hints on building an emergency food supply to be prepared for an emergency, and tips on how to make do and recover in the aftermath and ensure that your food is safe to eat and your water is safe to drink.

Before the Emergency

Preparing an Emergency Food and Water Supply

It is a good idea to always have a supply of non-perishable food on hand that can last your household for at least three days (some recommend a pantry that could last for up to a week). That way, you and your family will be able to eat, even in the face of an extended situation.

These foods should be chosen and stored with emergency situations in mind. The supply should include a variety of foods, so that you can maintain a nutritionally adequate diet, and should include foods that can be eaten cold, in case power and/or gas outages prevent you from being able to cook it. Water may be scarce, so foods that require little or no water to prepare are preferable.

Food should also be stored off the floor at sufficient levels to protect it from possible flooding—especially if your emergency pantry is stored in the basement. In most cases, 6 inches off the floor is enough, but if you have problems with flooding, you may consider storing foods higher than that. Flood waters can render dried goods (like powdered milk) unfit to use, and can contaminate the outsides of cans, making them difficult to prepare safely.

Water is perhaps the most essential component of an emergency food supply, as a few days without water would most likely be fatal. An adequate emergency water supply consists of one gallon of water per person, per day. Thus, a family of four

should have at least 12 gallons of water available for a three-day emergency supply. If you store tap water, it should be in clean, sanitized jugs that were never used to hold dangerous chemicals, juices, or dairy products, and should be replaced every 6 months. Store-bought water lasts indefinitely.

Your emergency food supply does not need to be bought in one fell swoop. It is easier and often more practical to build it up on an ongoing basis, adding cans and items to it each month. It is also a good idea to rotate the foods in it, using older cans and replacing them with newer cans, so that nothing in your emergency supply is older than 1 ½ - 2 years old. The chart on the following page provides recommendations for the type of foods and appropriate amounts that should make up an emergency food supply.

Additionally, at the beginning of an emergency, foods in your refrigerator and freezer can (and should) be used first, while they are still good. Avoid opening the doors to these appliances for any longer than necessary during power outages to avoid raising the temperature inside of them any more than necessary.



What Should Your Emergency Pantry Look Like Suggested by the Canned Food Alliance

Meats & Beans	What Counts	Recommended Amounts (Per person for 2,000 calories a day)	Pantry Options (per person, per day)
Vegetables	Canned meat, chicken, turkey, seafood and other protein-rich foods, such as beans (legumes) nuts and peanut butter)	Enough to provide 5½ ounces per day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 can (5 ounces) meat, fish, chicken or turkey • 1 can (15 ounces) beans (provides about 7 ounces of meat) • Keep peanut butter or ½ ounce nuts is equivalent to 1 ounce of meat 1 Tbsp. peanut butter or ½ ounce nuts is equivalent to 1 ounce meat
Fruits	Canned vegetables and vegetable juices	Enough to provide about 2½ cups per day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 can (14½ ounces) (provides about 1-1/3 cups) • 1 can (8 ounces) (provides about 1 cup)
Milk	Canned, boxed or dried milk and shelf stable, processed cheese	Enough to provide 3 cups of fluid milk equivalent per day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 can (12 ounces) evaporated milk (provides about 3 cups of fluid milk) • 1 box (1 quart) shelf-stable milk • Keep dry milk and shelf-stable, processed cheese on hand: 2 ounces processed cheese or 1/3 cup dry milk is equivalent to 8 ounces of milk
Grains	Ready-to-eat cereal, crackers, pretzels, instant oatmeal or other non-perishable grain products (granola, granola bars) that don't require cooking	Enough to provide 6 ounces of grain equivalent per day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 ounce is 1 cup ready-to-eat breakfast flakes or 5 whole-wheat crackers or 7 saltines
Water		Enough for 1 gallon per day	In hot weather or when vigorous activity is required (perhaps during storm clean up), people may perspire more and may need to plan to have additional fluids on hand

Remember to have other non-perishable items on hand such as canned chili, soup and spaghetti, trail mix, instant pudding, mustard, catsup, vinaigrette-type salad dressing, cookies and perhaps candy. Plan ahead to keep any unused canned products in a well-chilled cooler. Plan for food and water for infants, those with special health needs, and don't forget your pets.



What to Do When the Power Goes Out

Short power outages are not uncommon and generally require few precautions. Longer power outages, of multiple days, such as can occur in the wake of a powerful storm, are of more serious concern. Anytime perishable foods rise above safe storage temperatures, there is the likelihood of spoilage, and your food supplies should be carefully evaluated to determine whether they are safe to keep and use.

Evaluating Refrigerated Foods

A closed refrigerator without power will remain cold (below 40° F) for approximately 4-6 hours, if it has a good seal. Adding bags of ice (with or in pans to

catch the melting water) is a good way to keep food cold longer than that.

Open the door to the refrigerator only as necessary: to (quickly!) get food and to add ice. Every time you open the door, you raise the temperature of the refrigerator and shorten the amount of time the food can be safely held.

It is a good idea to keep a thermometer in your refrigerator so that you can know what the temperature inside is. The following chart¹ serves as a guide of how to handle different foods once the power has returned, assuming that the food inside has been held above 40° for more than 2 hours, including the time it takes for the refrigerator to return to temperature.

Refrigerated Foods: When to Save and When to Discard

As recommended by the USDA

Food	Held above 40°F for over 2 hours
Meat, Poultry, Seafood	
Raw or leftover cooked meat, poultry, fish or seafood; soy meat substitutes	Discard
Thawing meat or poultry	Discard
Meat, tuna, shrimp, chicken, or egg salad	Discard
Gravy, stuffing, broth	Discard
Lunchmeats, hot dogs, bacon, sausage, dried beef	Discard
Pizza—with any topping	Discard
Canned hams labeled "Keep Refrigerated"	Discard
Canned meats and fish, opened	Discard
Cheese	
Soft Cheeses: Blue/bleu, Roquefort, Brie, Camembert, cottage, cream, Edam, Monterey Jack, ricotta, mozzarella, Muenster, Neufchatel, queso blanco, queso fresco	Discard
Hard Cheeses: Cheddar, Colby, Swiss, Parmesan, provolone, Romando	Safe
Processed Cheeses	Safe
Shredded Cheeses	Discard
Low-fat Cheeses	Discard
Grated Parmesan, Romano, or combination (in can or jar)	Safe

Refrigerated Foods: When to Save and When to Discard

As recommended by the USDA

Food	Held above 40°F for over 2 hours
Dairy	
Raw or leftover cooked meat, poultry, fish or seafood; soy meat substitutes	Discard
Thawing meat or poultry	Discard
Meat, tuna, shrimp, chicken, or egg salad	Discard
Eggs	
Soft Cheeses: Blue/bleu, Roquefort, Brie, Camembert, cottage, cream, Edam, Monterey Jack, ricotta, mozzarella, Muenster, Neufchatel, queso blanco, queso fresco	Discard
Custards and puddings	Discard
Casseroles, Soups, Stews	Discard
Fruits	
Fresh fruits, cut	Discard
Fruit juices, opened	Discard
Canned fruits, opened	Safe
Fresh fruits, coconut, raisins, dried fruits, candied fruits, dates	Safe
Sauces, Spreads, Jams	
Opened mayonnaise, tarar sauce, horseradish	Discard if above 50°F, or over 8 hours
Peanut butter	Safe
Jelly, relish, taco sauce, mustard, catsup, olives, pickles	Safe
Worcestershire, soy, barbecue sauces, Hoisin, sauce	Safe
Fish sauces (oyster sauce)	Discard
Opened vinegar-based dressings	Safe
Opened creamy-based dressings	Discard
Spaghetti sauce, opened jar	Discard
Bread, Cakes, Cookies, Pasta, Grains	
Bread, rolls, cakes, muffins, quick breads, tortillas	Safe
Refrigerator biscuits, rolls, cookie dough	Discard
Cooked pasta, rice, potatoes	Discard
Fresh pasta	Discard
Cheesecake	Discard
Breakfast foods—waffles, pancakes, bagels	Safe
Pies, Pastry	
Pastries, cream filled	Discard
Pies—custard, cheese filled, or chiffon; quiche	Discard
Pies, fruit	Safe
Vegetables	
Fresh mushrooms, herbs, spices	Safe
Greens, pre-cut, pre-washed, packaged	Discard
Vegetables, raw	Safe
Vegetables, cooked; tofu	Discard
Vegetable juice, opened	Discard
Baked potatoes	Discard
Commercial garlic in oil	Discard
Potato Salad	Discard



Evaluating Frozen Foods

If your standalone freezer is full, food inside of it will generally stay frozen for about 48 hours once the power goes out; if the freezer is only half-full, the food will generally stay frozen only for about 24 hours.

It is a good idea to keep a thermometer in the freezer so that you know what the actual temperature inside of the unit is. Foods in the freezer should be evaluated once the power has come back on—but before the freezer has had a chance to re-freeze the

food, as at that point it is impossible to tell the extent to which the food thawed.

Most food that has partially thawed, but contains ice crystals, can be safely refrozen (though there may be some loss of quality). Food that has completely thawed, but has remained at or below 40° F, can be safely prepared and eaten. Food that has warmed above 40° F should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis according to the chart below.

Frozen Foods: When to Save and When to Discard

As recommended by the USDA

Food	Still Contains Ice Crystals and Feels Cold as if Refrigerated	Thawed. Held above 40°F for over 2 hours
Meat, Poultry, Seafood		
Beef, veal, lamb, pork and ground meat	Refreeze	Discard
Poultry and good poultry	Refreeze	Discard
Variety meats (liver, kidney, heart, chitterlings)	Refreeze	Discard
Casseroles, stews, sopus	Refreeze	Discard
Fish, shellfish, breaded seafood products	Refreeze. However, there will be some texture and flavor loss.	Discard
Dairy		
Milk	Refreeze. May lose some texture	Discard
Eggs (out of shell) and egg products	Refreeze	Discard
Ice Cream, frozen yogurt	Discard	Discard
Cheese (soft and semi-soft)	Refreeze. May lose some texture.	
Hard cheeses	Refreeze	Discard
Shredded cheeses	Refreeze	Discard
Casseroles containing milk, cream, eggs, soft cheeses	Refreeze	Discard
Cheesecake	Refreeze	Discard
Fruits		
Juices	Refreeze	Refreeze. Discard if mold, yeasty smell, or sliminess develops
Home or commercially packaged	Refreeze. Will change texture and flavor.	Refreeze. Discard if mold, yeasty smell, or sliminess develops

Frozen Foods: When to Save and When to Discard

As recommended by the USDA

Food	Still Contains Ice Crystals and Feels Cold as if Refrigerated	Thawed. Held above 40°F for over 2 hours
Vegetables		
Juices	Refreeze	Discard after held above 40°F for 6 hours.
Home or commercially packaged or blanched	Refreeze. May suffer texture and flavor loss.	Discard after held above 40°F for 6 hours.
Breads, Pastries		
Breads, rolls, muffins, cakes (without custard fillings)	Refreeze	Refreeze
Cakes, pies, pastries with custard or cheese filling	Refreeze	Discard
Pie crusts, commercial and homemade bread dough	Refreeze. Some quality loss can occur.	Refreeze. Quality loss is considerable.
Other		
Casseroles—pasta, rice based	Refreeze	Discard
Flour, cornmeal, nuts	Refreeze	Refreeze
Breakfast items —waffles, pancakes, bagels	Refreeze	Refreeze
Frozen meal, entree, specialty items (pizza, sausage and biscuit, meat pie, convenience foods	Refreeze	Discard

Additional Resources:

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has two resources available to help consumers answer food safety questions.

The **USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline** can answer questions regarding the safety of meat, poultry, or egg products, and is available on Mondays-Fridays from 10 am – 4 pm EST at 1-800-MPHotline (1-800-674-6854) or on TTY at 1-800-256-7072. Questions can be emailed to MPHHotline.fsis@usda.gov.

Karen is the USDA's automated response system that can provide food safety information to consumers 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, based on questions typed into the search engine. The Karen system is available at http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Food_Safety_Education/Ask_Karen/index.asp.

Additionally, Penn State Cooperative Extension Service operates offices in all PA counties and serves as a clearinghouse for information on a variety of topics, including food safety. A list of county offices can be found at <http://extension.psu.edu/counties>.



Evaluating Canned Goods that Have Frozen

In the event of a prolonged power outage during winter months, it is possible that your canned goods may freeze. While the fact that these cans have frozen does not automatically make them unfit to eat, it does create a situation in which the cans should be carefully evaluated before you decide whether to eat them.

If you have any doubts about the safety of your food, do not eat it. Bacteria and molds can enter cans with broken seals. Eating foods from cans with damaged seals may lead to serious health consequences. This chart¹ can help evaluate what should be done with these items:

Evaluating the Safety of Canned Goods that Have Frozen

	Can is Still Frozen	Can Thawed, but is Under 40°F	Can Thawed, but is Over 40°F
Seal is Intact: “Button” is still sealed on jars; visual inspection of seal at top of all metal cans shows no damage.	Thaw gradually and reevaluate once thawed to ensure that seal is still intact.	Safe to store and use.	Safe to store and use.
Seal is Broken: “Button” on jar pops open when pressed; visual inspection of seam at top of all-metal can shows damage.	Transfer food in metal cans to a plastic glass container with a tightly fitting lid. Thaw in the refrigerator and use as soon as possible.	Transfer food in metal cans to a plastic glass container with a tightly fitting lid. Thaw in the refrigerator and use as soon as possible.	Discard: Not safe to use or eat.
Can is Bulging	Store can in refrigerator and reevaluate when can is thawed. Discard if bulge does not go away, if there is no hiss of vacuum seal when opening can, if there is an odor, or it is off-color. Boil the food for 10 minutes before tasting.	Discard: Not safe to use or eat.	Discard: Not safe to use or eat.
Jar is Cracked	Discard: Not safe to use or eat.	Discard: Not safe to use or eat.	Discard: Not safe to use or eat.

Discard ANY product with an odor or that is off-color. Do not taste food that looks or smells suspicious. When in doubt, throw it out.



What to Do Following a Flood

Floodwaters harbor dirt, bacteria, raw sewage, and other contaminants—definitely not the sorts of things you want to get into your food. Prevent minor floods from getting to your food by storing all food at least six inches off the ground (more if you live in a flood-prone area).


If rising waters do get to your food supply, follow these tips to ensure that you eat only what is safe to eat:

Remember to also clean and sanitize any food-contact surface that has been exposed to floodwaters, including countertops, cutting boards,

pots, pans, and other cookware.

Discard wooden cutting boards, dishes, spoons, and utensils; plastic utensils; baby bottle nipples and pacifiers that have been in the floodwaters—these cannot be safely cleaned. Wash and sanitize all ceramic and metal dishes and utensils (including can openers) according to the directions listed for metal cans. Wash and rinse countertops, then sanitize with a solution of bleach (1 Tbl per gallon water) and allow to air dry. Wear gloves when working with bleach solution to avoid skin irritation.

What to Do with Food Exposed to Floodwaters

Glass jars or bottles (including home-canned food, commercially canned jars, and soda bottles).	Discard. Sediment can get between the jar and the lid or cap in spaces that are impossible to clean.
All-metal cans	Discard. Cans can not be safely cleaned and sanitized.
Waterproof “retort pouches” (shelf-stable juices, seafood pouches, etc. without spout/cap) 	Clean with soap and water. Rinse well. Sanitize by soaking for 15 minutes in a freshly-made solution of 1 tablespoon of unscented chlorine bleach per gallon of clean water. Air dry for a minimum of one hour before opening or storing. Use as soon as possible.
Boxes or other non-waterproof containers	Discard. As flood waters will have contaminated the food inside. This includes unopened cereal boxes. Though the food is contained in a plastic bag, this bag cannot be considered waterproof, and the food must be considered contaminated.



Food Safety Following A Fire

The intense heat from a fire can cause bacteria to grow inside of a can or jar of food, rendering it unfit to eat. Additionally, burning materials can release toxic fumes and particles that can contaminate food and cooking equipment that is well away from the fire itself. Plus, chemicals that are sometimes used

to fight fires are toxic. These three factors combined make evaluating the safety of food that has been through a fire an important—and difficult—task.

Evaluating the Safety of Food that has been through a Fire

Food Category	How to Handle
Jars	Discard—exposure to heat or chemicals renders unfit; these items cannot be cleaned or sanitized.
Cans, Exposed to Heat	Discard—exposure to heat may activate food spoilage bacteria.
Cans, Exposed to Chemicals/ Fumes (but not Heat)	Discard—chemicals/fine particles can become lodged in crevices and are impossible to fully clean/sanitize.
Food in Boxes, Bags, Foil, Wrap and Other Permeable Packaging	Discard—exposure to fumes/chemicals renders these items unfit to eat.
Fruits and Vegetables, Outside of Refrigerator	Discard—exposure to fumes/chemicals renders these items unfit to eat.
Food Stored Inside Refrigerator/Freezer	Proceed with caution—the seal on the refrigerator/freezer door is not necessarily airtight, so contamination may have occurred. Discard anything that has an off-odor without tasting. Discard anything that has an off-flavor. If there was a loss of power, refer to the chart on power outages for evaluation of individual items.
Ice	Discard—exposure to fumes/chemicals renders these items unfit to eat.
Disposable Plates, Cups, Utensils	Discard—exposure to fumes/chemicals renders these items unfit to use.
Wooden Spoons, Cutting Boards, other utensils	Discard—exposure to fumes/chemicals renders these items unfit to use. These items cannot be fully cleaned/sanitized.
Ceramic & Metal Cookware, Utensils, and Food Contact Surfaces	Clean with soap and water. Rinse well. Sanitize by soaking for 15 minutes in a freshly-made solution of 1 tablespoon of unscented chlorine bleach per gallon of clean water. Air dry for a minimum of one hour before using or storing

Even though a surface may look clean, fine particles of toxic chemicals from fumes and/or fire-fighting chemicals may still be present. Clean and sanitize everything thoroughly. Hiring a professional fire restoration service may be prudent. Check with your insurance company for recommendations.



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**Shelf Life of
Food Bank Products**



Shelf Life of Food Bank Products

Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank often distributes food items after the date on the package. This food is still safe to eat! Food manufacturers use different date codes to ensure that consumers receive their product at peak quality. Once a product is past code date, many manufacturers donate it to food banks. Food Bank staff monitors this food to ensure that the quality remains good. This provides a reference for the “shelf life” of this product, or how long these foods are good past code date.

How to use this guide:

The first section of the guide provides a brief introduction to how manufacturers use dates to code their food for purchase. Then, the guide offers a series of charts that offer guidance on how long different foods can be safely consumed past the date stamped on the packaging.

The foods listed in this guide are organized according to the following categories:

- **Shelf-Stable Foods, pp. 15-18** Anything that can be stored at room temperature before opening. This category includes baby foods, condiments, canned goods, and dry goods.
- **Shelf-Stable Beverages, p. 19** Juices, soda, water, and other drinks designed to be stored at room temperature until opening. Not to be confused with beverages that must be kept refrigerated.
- **Foods Purchased Refrigerated, pp. 20-21:** This category includes beverages that must be kept cold. Many of these items can be frozen after purchase to increase their storage time. This guide indicates how long an item can be expected to keep in the refrigerator or freezer.

- **Foods Purchased Frozen, p. 22:** Foods that would be found in the freezer section of a grocery store. These foods should be kept frozen until they are to be used, and should be pulled only as needed for immediate distribution.
- **Raw Meat, p. 23-24:** This includes frozen meats distributed through the food bank. These meats were frozen on or before the sell-by date marked on each package. Meats will keep indefinitely when stored at freezer temperatures. They should be pulled from the freezer only as needed for immediate distribution.
- **Prepared Foods, p. 24:** Prepared dips, side dishes, salads, etc. These items are sometimes available from the Shop-Thru cooler at Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank, or may be available through other donation streams. These items are generally perishable and you should pay close attention to how long the best by date can be extended safely.
- **Fresh Produce, p. 25:** There are too many factors with fresh produce to provide a reliable timeline for how long certain items will be good. However, we have provided some tips for how to store certain items for longest life and best flavor.

This guide offers a fairly thorough list of foods that may be distributed by Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank. It is not, however, exhaustive, and some items that you receive may not be covered by the guidance included. Should any questions arise about items not included in this guide, call our nutritionist at (412) 460-3663 x 402, or email nutrition@gpcfb.org with your question. We will determine a safe extension for the product in question as quickly as possible and add it to future revisions of the shelf life guide.

What do the Dates on Food Packages and Medicines Mean?

The only foods that are required by federal law to have expiration dates are baby food, infant formula, and over-the-counter medications. No medicines should be distributed after the expiration date. The Food Bank does not distribute most baby food past its expiration date. However, some products designed for babies such as juice and cookies or biscuits can be distributed past their date and are safe to eat.

Many canned and boxed products are safe to eat long after the date on the container, and the shelf life of refrigerated and frozen foods can be extended if they are handled properly. Once a perishable item is frozen, it doesn't matter if the date expires—foods kept frozen continuously are safe indefinitely, though the quality slowly deteriorates over time. Here are some code dates you may see on food packages:

Expiration Date

(Examples: "Expires 11/15/11" or "Do not use after 11/15/11")

- **Look for it on:** Baby food and formula, medicines, vitamins, yeast, baking powder.
- **What it means:** Do not distribute infant formula, baby food, vitamins, or medicines after the expiration date! Yeast and baking powder work less well after expiration but are safe to eat.

Pack Date

(Examples: "Packed on 03/01/2012" or "22:5306412" or "KL064")

- **Look for it on:** Canned food, crackers, cookies, spices.

- **What it means:** This is the date the food was packaged. A code is often used that cannot be understood by the general public, often numbering days sequentially such that January 1 is day 001 and December 31 is day 365 (366 in leap years). Usually this food is of good quality and safe to eat for a long time past the date.

Sell By Date

(Example: "Sell by January 1, 2012". Also called "Pull Date")

- **Look for it on:** Refrigerated foods such as milk, yogurt, cottage cheese, eggs, lunch meat, packaged salad mixes.
- **What it means:** The store must sell these foods before the code date listed and often donates these foods when they are close to date. If the food has been handled properly it is still safe to eat and the quality is good. Food bank staff monitors this food to ensure that the quality remains good.

Use By or Quality Date

(Examples: "Best if used by 1/1/12" or "Use Before 1/1/12")

- **Look for it on:** Crackers, cookies, cold cereals, and other dry, shelf stable food.
- **What it means:** This date is the manufacturer's recommendation for how long the food will be at peak quality. After the quality date, the food is still safe to eat but slowly begins to lose nutrients and the quality begins to lessen.



Shelf-Stable Product

Most shelf-stable or 'dry' foods (cans, boxes, bags) remain edible for several days, months, or even years past their code date. Always examine the packaging to make sure it has not been damaged too much so that the food is no longer safe to eat.

Do Not Consume Food from Cans or Jars If:

- Leaking or stained
- Swollen can
- Rusty
- Badly dented, crimped or pinched
- Container is cracked
- Foul odor
- Safety seals are broken or missing
- Lids are loose or missing
- Foods exhibit changed color or odor—never taste suspicious foods!

Do Not Consume Food from Boxes If:

Inside bag:

- Is torn or leaking
- Has moldy or foreign objects inside
- Seals are ripped

Box without an inside bag:

- Is open or torn
- Has live or dead insects, webs, or droppings
- Is stained or wet

Tips on Storing Canned and Boxed Food:

- Store cans and boxes off the floor, either on a pallet or shelf and 18 inches away from the wall so air can circulate.
- Store canned and boxed goods in a clean, dry, and cool area (below 85°F).
- Extremely hot (over 100°F) and cold (below 30°F) temperatures can damage canned goods and shorten shelf life.
- Always rotate your stock—First in-First out! Distribute or use older products before newer ones.



Shelf-Stable Foods		Shelf Life After Code Date
Baby Food		
Cereal: dry mixes		Expiration date on package
Food in jars, cans		Expiration date on package
Formula		Expiration date on package
Juice		1 year
Canned Foods		
Beans		3 years
Fish: salmon, tuna, sardines, mackerel		3 years
Frosting, canned		10 months
High-acid foods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fruit (including applesauce, juices) • pickles, sauerkraut • baked beans w/ mustard/ vinegar • tomatoes, tomato-based soups & sauces 		1-2 years
Low-acid foods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gravy, soups/ broths that aren't tomato-based • pasta, stews, cream sauces • vegetables (not tomatoes) 		2-3 years
Meat: beef, chicken, pork, turkey		2-3 years
Pie filling		3 years
Aseptically-packaged Products		
UHT Milk		1 year
Broth: beef, chicken, or vegetable		3 years
Soup		3 years
Fruits		3 years
Vegetables		3 years

Condiments, Sauces, Syrups

Barbecue sauce (bottled)	1 year
Frosting, canned	10 months
Gravy (dry mix envelopes)	2 years
Honey	2 years--remains safe after crystallization. To use, simply immerse closed container in hot (not boiling) water until honey liquefies
Jams, jellies, preserves	18 months
Ketchup, cocktail, or chili sauce: jar, bottle, or packet	18 months
Mayonnaise: jar, bottle, or packet	3-6 months
Molasses	2 years
Mustard: jar, bottle, or packet	2 years
Olives	18-24 months
Pickles	1 year, canned 2 years, jarred--discard if inside of lid is rusty upon opening
Salad dressings: bottled	1 year
Salsa: bottled	12-18 months
Spaghetti sauce, canned	18 months
Spaghetti sauce, jarred	18 months
Syrup, chocolate	2 years
Syrup, corn	2 years
Syrup, pancake	2 years
Vinegar	2 years
Worcestershire sauce	2 years

Dry Goods

Baking mix, pancake	9 months
Baking mixes (brownie, cake, muffin, etc.)	12-18 months
Baking powder	18 months
Baking soda	indefinite if kept dry
Beans, dried	1 year
Bouillon: beef or chicken	12-24 months
Bouillon: vegetable	12-24 months
Bread, commercially prepared (including rolls)	3-5 days at room temp 3 months stored frozen

Dry Goods (Continued)	
Cakes, commercially prepared	2-4 days at room temp several months frozen
Candy (all, including chocolate)	9 months, caramel 18 months, chocolate 36 months, hard candy
Casserole Mix	9-12 months
Cereal, cold	1 year
Cereal, hot	1 year
Cookies	4 months
Cornmeal	1 year at room temp 2+ years frozen
Crackers	8 months except graham crackers, 2 months
Flour, white (all purpose or cake)	1 year
Flour, whole wheat	6 months keeps longer if refrigerated or frozen
Fruit, dried	6 months
Macaroni and Cheese, mix	9-12 months
Nuts, out of shell	6-12 months, bagged 12-24 months, canned
Nuts, in shell	6-12 months
Oatmeal	12 months
Oil, olive, vegetable, salad	6 months
Pasta, dry (egg noodles)	2-3 years
Pasta, dry (no egg)	2-3 years
Peanut butter	18 months
Popcorn, kernels	2 years
Popcorn, commercially popped and bagged	2-3 months
Popcorn, microwave packets	1 year
Potato chips	2 months
Potatoes, mashed, instant flakes	1 year
Pretzels	6-8 months
Pudding, prepared/ shelf stable	1 week
Rice, brown	1 year

Dry Goods (Continued)

Rice, white	2 years
Rice-based mixes	6 months
Shortening, vegetable	8-12 months
Spices	up to 4 years, whole spices up to 2 years, ground spices Spices lose flavor over time but remain safe to use indefinitely
Stuffing mix	9-12 months
Sugar, brown (light or dark)	18 months
Sugar, confectioners	18 months
Sugar, white	2+ years
Sugar substitute	2 years
Toaster pastries	6 months, fruit 9 months, no fruit
Tortillas	3 months, shelf or refrigerator 6 months, freezer Do not use if they develop mold or harden

Shelf Life of Food Bank Products

The following information applies only to shelf-stable beverages. Juices and milk products requiring refrigeration are covered in the next section, along with other refrigerated items.

Shelf-Stable Beverages	Shelf Life After Code Date
Cocoa Mixes	36 months
Coffee creamer, liquid shelf stable	9-12 months
Coffee creamer, powdered	2 years
Coffee, ground	2 years
Coffee, instant	1-2 years
Coffee, whole bean	1 year, vacuum packed
Instant breakfast	6 months
Juice, bottle, shelf-stable	9 months
Juice, box	4-6 months
Juice, canned	18 months
Juice concentrate, shelf-stable	
Milk, evaporated	1 year
Milk, non-fat dry	1 year
Milk, shelf stable UHT	6 months
Milk, sweetened condensed	1 year
Nutritional aid supplements (Boost, Ensure, etc.)	1 year
Rice milk, shelf stable	6 months
Carbonated beverages (soda/ seltzer water)	3 months, bottles (all) 3 months, diet (cans) 9 months, regular soda or seltzer (cans)
Soymilk, shelf stable	6 months
Tea, bagged	18 months
Tea, instant	3 years
Tea, loose leaf	2 years
Water	indefinite; store in a cool, dark place away from chemicals
Water, flavored	indefinite; store in a cool, dark place away from chemicals



Tips on Storing Refrigerated Food

- Keep all chilled food refrigerated at 40° F or below until distribution.
- Store eggs in their original carton.
- Leave space for air to circulate between items in

Dairy and Cooler Items	Refrigerated	Frozen
Butter	2-3 months	1 year
Buttermilk	10-14 days	Freezes poorly
Cheese trays	2 weeks	Do not freeze
Cheese, Cottage	10-15 days	Freezes poorly
Cheese, Cream	2 weeks	Freezes poorly
Cheese, hard	6 months	6-8 months
Cheese, soft	1-2 weeks	6 months
Cheese, processed	3-4 weeks	6 months
Coffee creamer, liquid refrigerated	3 weeks	Follow instructions on package
Cream, Half & Half	3-4 days	4 months; use for cooking
Cream, Heavy	10 days	3-4 months; shake upon thawing to loosen; use for cooking
Cream, Light	1 week	3-4 months; use for cooking
Crust, pie or pizza ready to bake	Sell-by date	2 months
Dips, made with sour cream	2 weeks	Do not freeze
Dough, biscuit	Sell-by date	Do not freeze
Dough, bread or pizza	Sell-by date	Do not freeze
Dough, cookie	Sell-by date	2-3 months
Eggs, in shell	4-5 weeks	Do not freeze
Eggs, pasteurized carton egg substitute, unopened	10 days	1 year

Shelf Life of Food Bank Products

Eggs, pasteurized carton real eggs, unopened	10 days	1 year
Juice, purchased refrigerated	3 weeks	8-12 months
Margarine	6 months	12 months
Milk (not shelf stable)	1 week	1-3 months; use for cooking
Pudding, purchased refrigerated	1-2 days	Do not freeze
Salad dressing, refrigerated packets	3 months	Do not freeze
Sour cream	2-3 weeks	Do not freeze
Whipped cream, aerosol	3-4 weeks	Do not freeze
Whipped topping, aerosol	3 months	Do not freeze
Whipped topping, non-dairy tub	2 weeks	14 months; do not refreeze once thawed
Yogurt	10-14 days	1-2 months



Tips on Storing Frozen Food

- If food remains continuously frozen, it will last much longer than if it is exposed to changing temperatures. Keep all frozen food at 0° F or below until distribution.
- Leave meat, poultry, and seafood in the original packaging when distributing. It is unsafe to open and repack these foods.

Shelf-Stable Beverages	Shelf Life After Code Date
Bread, Bagels	3 months
Chicken, nuggets/ patties	2 months
Desserts, frozen baked goods	3-4 months
Desserts, frozen cream pies	1-2 months
Desserts, frozen fruit pies	6-8 months
Dinners: pies, casseroles, shrimp, ham, pork, or sausage	3-4 months
Dinners: beef, turkey, chicken, or fish	6 months
Dough, bread	1 month; longer storage inactivates yeast, weakens gluten
Dough, cookie	3 months
Pasteurized eggs in cartons	1 year, purchased frozen, unopened, never thawed
Fish, Breaded	4-6 months
Ice Pops	6 months
Fruit, frozen	4 months
Ice cream	2-4 months
Juice concentrate	2 years
Soy meat substitutes	12-18 months
Vegetables	8 months
Waffles, pancakes	2 months
Whipped topping, non-dairy tub	6 months

Shelf Life of Food Bank Products

Meats distributed through Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank should be completely frozen, and stored at 0°F or lower for as long as possible before distribution. Do not leave meats at room temperature unnecessarily!

Meats, Fresh	Refrigerated (40°F or below)	Frozen (0°F or below)
Fish/ Seafood: Uncooked		
Fatty fish (salmon, mackerel, perch, bluefish)	2 days	3-6 months
Lean fish (cod, flounder, sole, haddock, pollock)	2 days	12 months
Shrimp, raw	2 days	9 months
Crab, canned	6 months unopened; 5-7 days opened	Do not freeze
Crab, legs	3-5 days	9-12 months
Oysters, shucked	1-2 days	3-4 months
Lobster Tails, raw	4-5 days	6-9 months
Scallops, raw	1-2 days	3-6 months
Fish/ Seafood, Cooked		
Fatty Fish (salmon, mackerel, perch, bluefish)	5-7 days	3-6 months
Lean Fish (cod, flounder, sole, haddock, pollock)	5-7 days	3-6 months
Shrimp and other Shellfish	5-7 days	3-6 months
Meats, Raw		
Beef Roasts	3-5 days	1 year
Beef Steaks	3-5 days	1 year
Pork Roasts	3-5 days	1 year
Pork Chops	3-5 days	1 year
Lamb Roasts	3-5 days	1 year
Lamb Steaks/ Chops	3-5 days	1 year
Poultry: Chicken or Turkey, whole cuts	2 days	1 year
Ground Meats (beef, pork, lamb, or poultry)	2 days	9-12 months
Meats, Processed		
Bacon, unopened	2 weeks	6 months
Bacon, opened	1 week	2 months
Chicken, Fried	4 days	4 months
Chicken, Nuggets/ Patties	2 days	3 months

Meats (Continued)		
Ham, unopened	2 weeks	1 year
Ham, opened	1 week	1-2 months
Hot Dogs, unopened	2 weeks	9 months
Luncheon Meats, deli sliced or opened	3-5 days	Do not freeze
Luncheon Meats, unopened commercial	2 weeks	1-2 months
Pepperoni, Salami	1 month	6 months
Sausage, raw	2 days	6 months
Sausage, smoked links or patties	1 week	9 months

Prepared Foods

Prepared foods should be kept refrigerated until distributed. These foods are perishable, and leaving them at room temperature will shorten their shelf life.

Prepared Items/ Deli Foods	Refrigerated (40°F or below)	Frozen (0°F or below)
Chicken, Roasted or Fried	3-4 days	4-6 months
Fruit, cut	Best By Date	Do Not Freeze
Guacamole	5-7 days	6 months
Hummus, Pasteurized	3 months	Do Not Freeze
Hummus, with Preservatives	2 months	Do Not Freeze
Hummus, traditional (no preservatives, not pasteurized)	7 days	Do Not Freeze
Main dishes, meals	3-4 days	2-3 months
Meats in gravy or broth (including meat pies)	1-2 days	6 months
Pasta, fresh	1 week	1 month
Salads, prepared (macaroni, egg, potato, chicken, tuna, etc.)	3-5 Days	Do Not Freeze
Sauces, Egg-Based (Hollandaise, etc.)	10 days	Do Not Freeze
Side dishes, cooked vegetables	3-4 days	1-2 months
Side dishes, potato-based (not salad)	3-4 days	1-2 months
Side dishes, rice	3-4 days	1-2 months
Soups, Stews	2-3 days	4-6 months
Spinach, salad greens (bagged)	Date on Bag	Do Not Freeze



Tips on Storing Fresh Produce

- Most fruits and vegetables have the best quality when kept refrigerated. There are, however some exceptions.
- Tomatoes taste best if not refrigerated. Cold storage can cause them to become mealy.
- Bananas should not be refrigerated unless fully ripe, and then they should be used within 1-2 days. Refrigeration will cause banana skin to blacken, but the fruit will not ripen while cold.
- If they are very fresh, apples, mangoes, and stone fruits (plums, peaches, etc.) can be stored at room temperature, but these items should be refrigerated as they ripen.
- Hardy vegetables like onions, garlic, potatoes, sweet potatoes, and winter squash can be stored in cool, dark places outside of the cooler.



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Shelf Life Handout

Most canned and boxed products are safe to eat long after the date on the container, and the shelf life of refrigerated and frozen foods can be extended if they are handled properly.

GREATER PITTSBURGH

community
food bank



Canned Foods

Beans	3 years
Fish: salmon, tuna, sardines, mackerel	3 years
Frosting, canned	10 months
High-acid foods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fruit (including applesauce, juices) • pickles, sauerkraut • baked beans w/ mustard/ vinegar • tomatoes, tomato-based soups & sauces 	1-2 years
Low-acid foods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gravy, soups/ broths that aren't tomato-based • pasta, stews, cream sauces • vegetables (not tomatoes) 	2-3 years
Meat: beef, chicken, pork, turkey	2-3 years

Dry Goods

Baking mix, pancake	9 months
Beans, dried	1 year
Casserole Mix	9-12 months
Cereal, cold	1 year
Macaroni and Cheese, mix	9-12 months
Oatmeal	12 months
Pasta, dry	2-3 years
Peanut butter	18 months
Rice, brown	1 year
Rice, white	2 years
Rice-based mixes	6 months
Stuffing mix	9-12 months

Shelf-Stable Beverages		Shelf Life After Code Date
Juice, bottle, shelf-stable		9 months
Juice, box		4-6 months
Juice, canned		18 months
Milk, non-fat dry		1 year
Milk, shelf stable UHT		6 months
Dairy and Cooler Items		
	Refrigerated	Frozen
Cheese, Cottage	10-15 days	Freezes poorly
Cheese, hard	6 months	6-8 months
Cheese, soft	1-2 weeks	6 months
Cheese, processed	3-4 weeks	6 months
Eggs, in shell	4-5 weeks	Do not freeze
Margarine	6 months	12 months
Milk (not shelf stable)	1 week	1-3 months; use for cooking
Sour cream	2-3 weeks	Do not freeze
Yogurt	10-14 days	1-2 months
Fish/ Seafood: Uncooked		
	Refrigerated	Frozen
Fatty fish (salmon, mackerel, perch, bluefish)	2 days	3-6 months
Lean fish (cod, flounder, sole, haddock, pollock)	2 days	12 months
Meats, Raw Refrigerated Frozen		
	Refrigerated	Frozen
Roasts, steaks, chops	3-5 days	1 year
Poultry: Chicken or Turkey, whole cuts	2 days	1 year
Ground Meats (beef, pork, lamb, or poultry)	2 days	9-12 months
Meats, Processed Refrigerated Frozen		
	Refrigerated	Frozen
Bacon, unopened	2 weeks	6 months
Chicken, Nuggets/ Patties	2 days	3 months
Ham, unopened	2 weeks	1 year
Hot Dogs, unopened	2 weeks	9 months
Luncheon Meats, unopened	2 weeks	1-2 months

Posters

How Many Germs Live on Your Cell Phone?



**A Cell Phone Has
18 Times
More Bacteria
Than A
Public
Restroom**

**Keep Our Food Safe
Don't handle your phone
while you're handling food.**

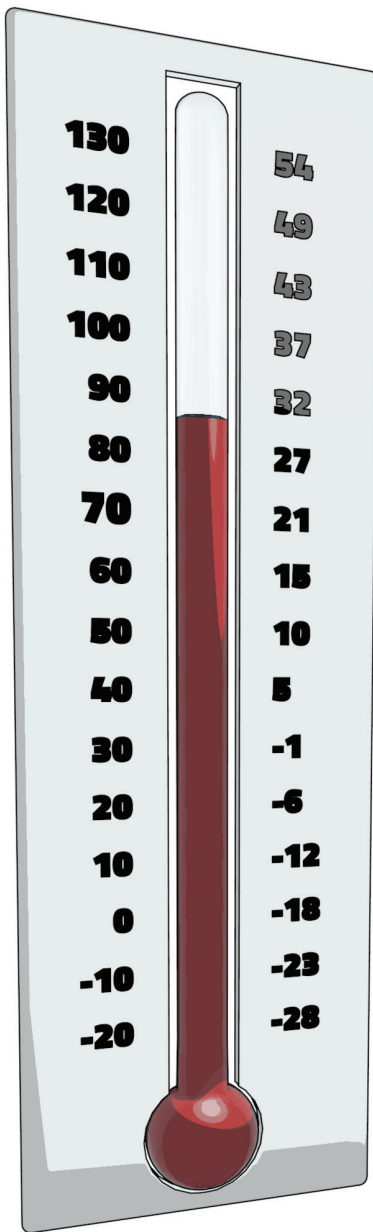
**75% of Americans Use
Their Phone on the Toilet**



**0% of Americans Use
Their Phone while
Distributing Food**

Keep our food safe:

No cell phones while you're handling food.



Beware of the Temperature Danger Zone

Don't give bacteria a chance to grow!

Keep cold foods cold to keep cold foods safe.

Pull these items from cold storage in small quantities on an as-needed basis.



Foods requiring refrigeration should be kept cold during distribution.

These include:

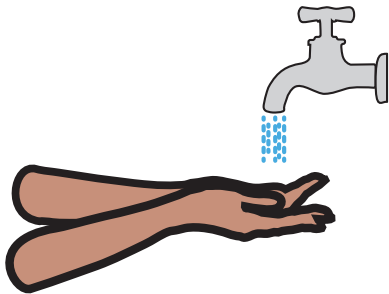
- Cheese
- Eggs
- Milk (except shelf-stable milk)
- Yogurt
- And other dairy products

Foods received frozen should be kept frozen during distribution.

These include:

- Meats
- Poultry
- Fish
- Fish sticks
- Anything else received frozen

Please Wash Your Hands Before and After Handling Food



1) Wet your hands with warm water.

Getting your hands wet first will help make sure that you don't rinse the soap away.



2) Soap up!

One squirt should do. Soap helps to break up grease and dirt. It also washes away bacteria.



3) Lather.

Don't forget to get your thumbs and between your fingers. A good hand washing takes 20 seconds—so sing the alphabet song to time it!



4) Rinse.

It's okay to turn off the water before you get your paper towel. Use your elbow or knuckles on the faucet handles if you want to be extra careful.



Quick Guide to Recalls

Food recalls happen every day. Most of them do not affect the food that we distribute, but many of them do affect our region. Greater Pittsburgh

Community Food Bank tracks all food safety recalls affecting southwestern Pennsylvania and shares this information with you to help you check your inventory for recalled foods.

We have 4 general classes of recalls. Here is more information to help you know how to handle each of them.

General Recalls

Most recalls are not emergency situations. Many are for specialty products or products that we are unlikely to distribute through the food bank. Still, we track these recalls so we can keep an eye on our mixed food boxes and try to keep recalled items out of them.

It is a good idea for you to keep an eye on these recalls, too, in case an item got into a mixed box before the recall was announced or in case a recalled item sneaks past one of our volunteers.

Recalls are posted on our website at pittsburghfoodbank.org/food-recalls. Here, you can read the recalls by date or search by keyword to get more information. All recalls posted on our page affect our region.

Expanding Recalls

Sometimes, an ingredient that is used in many foods is recalled. These recalls can spiral out and get very big. When this happens, the recalls are usually in the news, but we will still send an email out to all of our agencies to give you more information and help you know what to look for.

Retail Store Recalls

If your food pantry participates in Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank's Retail Store Pickup Program and we know that you are picking up

foods directly from a grocery store, we will send you an email when a food sold at that store has been recalled. For more information about the Retail Store Pickup Program, please email foodresource@pittsburghfoodbank.org.

Direct Recalls

If a food that we had on our inventory is recalled, and you ordered that food item from us, we will send you a detailed email that will walk you through what you need to do.

Generally speaking, when this happens, we will need you to count how many cases of this item you have left and to handle these remaining cases according to instructions that we receive from the manufacturer.

You may need to return remaining cases to the food bank, destroy remaining food, or distribute a revised ingredient label with the recalled food. If there is a high risk of illness, you may need to call all of your clients to let them know about the dangers posed by the food. The most important thing in these instances is to pay close attention to the instructions and to communicate any information we need about the recalled item to us as quickly as possible.

Mock Recalls

Twice a year, Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank tests our recall procedures by announcing a mock recall. If you receive a mock recall notice, please follow all instructions exactly as you would in case of an actual recall. However, the food is still safe to eat, so please do not destroy any of it.

If you have any questions about recalls, please email nutrition@pittsburghfoodbank.org.



Handle with Care.